

Friends Of Swimming

Who Are They?

Some time ago, Friends of Swimming (FOS) was formed by a group of very insightful parents, who encouraged the team to buy their own timing system. And since the team had its own timing equipment, they volunteered their time to run it for other teams. FOS charges a fee to run the timing equipment. The money they make goes back to the team in the form of scholarships for graduating high school JETS swimmers and maintaining the timing equipment, along with purchasing new equipment. In addition, our 'computer room' volunteers are using computers donated by FOS. At the end of each winter season, the team hosts a banquet where awards donated by FOS are given out for attendance.

I estimate that the team's timing equipment is worth close to \$40,000. As you can see, the equipment is expensive enough that not many teams own their own. Over the years, other teams and swim officials, knowing we have our own equipment, have recruited FOS to run the timing system for their meets. I've been involved with FOS for the last several seasons where we have run the timing system for Lewis University swim team, Plainfield High School swim team, and various Chicagoland area country clubs.

In the winter time, FOS runs the timing equipment for Lewis University's swim team at their pool in Lockport. Usually, we work at four or five dual or triangular meets per season. Their season only goes during the normal school year, say October through January. In the summer time, a long time head meet referee, Rich Mueller, has recruited FOS to run timing equipment for the Chicago area Country Club swim leagues, which are numerous. This results in FOS running timing equipment for an additional four or five meets. They are not as big as our meets, but they do generate revenue for FOS. Since being with FOS, we have also run timing equipment for a dual meet hosted by Plainfield High School.

Timing equipment requirements vary with each meet. At the Lewis meets, we typically set up the scoreboard, timing console, starter system with remote speaker, touch pads (at the start end only) and all the interconnecting cables. We also supply and operate the laptop computer that runs Meet Manager, which is special software for swim meets. We also supply printers for the reports generated by the timing console and the results reports generated by the Meet Manager software.

During the summer, the country club meets may or may not use the scoreboard. We may or may not use the touch pads, but we typically use the pushbuttons. So, just like the Lewis meet, we need to run the interconnecting cables, set up and run the timing console and printer and may or may not need to provide and run the laptop computer and associated printer.

If a meet requires the minimum equipment like one of our dual meets, such as the timing console, printer, starter system, pushbuttons, and cables; we can haul everything in a car. However, if the meet requires the scoreboard and/or touch pads, we must bring the timing equipment trailer. We would need someone to haul the trailer back and forth from the meet.

A longtime FOS volunteer, very generous with his time and employees is Bob Baish. He continues to help even though his swimmer has long left the team. On numerous occasions, Bob has paid two of his employees to haul the trailer and help setup and breakdown the timing equipment. Bob used to keep both our concessions/hospitality equipment trailer and the timing equipment trailer on his property in Plainfield. This past year, Bob has found a better location for our trailers. His friend, Mike Blake, who has a business in Rockdale, was gracious enough to allow us to keep the trailers in his fenced-in property free of charge.

To continue this tradition and provide the additional support to the team requires volunteers. I've started helping nearly two years ago. Several of the people volunteering their time no longer have kids swimming and even though they continue to help, they are looking to retire. There are several parents who help when they can, but aren't always available. We need more parents willing to help out and learn how to setup and run the timing system. This will help with the team's own meets. It takes at least three or four people to setup and breakdown. To run the system, a minimum of two or three people are needed. Please consider helping out. Meets usually last about four or five hours including the setup and breakdown.

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